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Margaret Roberts THATCHER **UNITED KINGDOM**

Prime Minister
(since May 1979)

Addressed as:
Prime Minister

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Leader of the Conservative Party since 1975, Margaret Thatcher is a commanding figure on the British political scene. A self-proclaimed crusader for free enterprise and British economic revival, she stresses the need to fight inflation, cut government spending, and control the money supply while increasing industrial productivity and bringing private business into key sectors of the economy. Although she has not yet achieved her goal of restoring Britain's commercial competitiveness, she says she is determined to succeed. Thatcher often takes bold, decisive stands. Her handling of the Falkland Islands conflict and the image of resolute leadership she projected during that crisis boosted her standing in the opinion polls and within her own party. Thatcher capitalized on her popularity by calling national elections in June 1983 in which her party won an overwhelming victory. [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3)

[redacted] Thatcher respects toughness and takes pride in asserting that her government will pursue the policies it believes to be right regardless of the difficulties along the way. The press has dubbed her the Iron Lady; her critics contend that she is cold, rigidly doctrinaire, and autocratic. [redacted] (b)(3)

Moving Into a Second Term

After the election Thatcher moved swiftly to place her own indelible stamp on her new Cabinet team. She promoted various loyalists, many of whom, like her, are self-made Tories who rose from modest social backgrounds to positions of power. At the same time, she dropped from influential posts two Tory barons who, [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3) represent the older and more pragmatic patrician wing of the party that had long been the dominant force in Tory politics. Her policy goals for her second term—as outlined in government speeches in Parliament—remain largely the same as those of her first term: reduced government spending, low inflation (the current inflation rate in Britain is less than 4 percent), lower public borrowing, and the selling off of important government-owned industries. Thatcher will also seek to restrict the powers of Britain's trade unions. [redacted] (b)(3)

Thatcher on Her Domestic Record

Thatcher has frequently and publicly embraced what she views as the traditional values of individual self-reliance, thrift, initiative, and a sense of duty. During early 1983 press interviews, she claimed that as Prime Minister she had been able to change popular attitudes significantly and that the British public now accepted the idea that responsibility should be shifted from the state to the individual. On particular issues, she indicated that she was proud to note that since she had taken office, the inflation rate in Britain had been sharply reduced and that the number of civil service empoyees had been cut to the lowest level in 15 years. In response to charges by her critics that her anti-inflation policies had also

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swollen the ranks of the unemployed, Thatcher said that by reducing inflation the government was in fact fighting unemployment by laying a firm economic foundation for the future. (b)(3)

Foreign and Defense Policy

Thatcher is strongly anti-Soviet and a firm ally of the United States. She has publicly stated that Britain cannot defend itself without a "close, effective, and warm-hearted alliance" with this country. An advocate of the concept of deterrence, in November 1982 she called the US strategic force the "final guarantor of Europe's liberty." Thatcher welcomed the election of President Ronald Reagan, because she believes he shares her views on the importance of private enterprise and the need to meet the Soviet challenge. In late July 1983 she publicly defended US policy in Central America. (b)(3)

Despite her general support for this country, Thatcher can be outspoken about those US policies with which she disagrees. In May 1983 she publicly criticized high US interest rates (a result, she said, of the US budget deficit) as being deleterious to economic recovery in Britain. In a statement before the House of Commons in July 1983, she described as "deplorable" this country's imposition of new tariffs and import quotas on specialty steel. (b)(3)

Long an advocate of a strong NATO, Thatcher has agreed to permit the stationing of US cruise missiles in Britain, beginning in late 1983. She has staunchly defended such deployments, despite vocal antinuclear sentiment in the United Kingdom. (b)(1)
satisfaction about the way her government has (b)(3)
been able to turn public opinion around on the issue of missile deployment and the general subject of defense. She has also decided to modernize Britain's nuclear deterrent through the acquisition of the US Trident ballistic missile system. A proponent of multilateral disarmament, Thatcher has frequently stressed in public that verification is not an optional extra in the disarmament process but is instead the "heart of the matter." She has publicly supported President Ronald Reagan's various arms control proposals for intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe. (b)(3)

Thatcher has been one of Europe's strongest critics of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the curtailing of civil liberties in Poland. In October 1982 she visited Berlin and denounced the wall dividing that city as a "grim monument to a cruel and desolate creed." Thatcher supports British membership in the European Communities but is sharply critical of how the current EC budget is structured. (b)(3)

Personal Data

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Thatcher, 57, is a forceful and self-confident leader who relies on only a few advisers when making policy decisions. she is (b)(1)
authoritative and scathing in debate, a tireless worker, and a fast learner who has no (b)(3)
tolerance for bureaucracy or bureaucratic delay. Thatcher, (b)(1)
who is proud of her convictions and who places a premium on strength of purpose, is often (b)(3)
resistant to change. She has evolved a style of government that is far more (b)(1)
personalized than those of her recent predecessors. (b)(3)

A graduate of Oxford, Thatcher has worked as a research chemist and a lawyer. She has served in Parliament since 1959. She has visited the United States many times. In early August 1983 she underwent surgery to correct a torn retina in her right eye. Thatcher enjoys listening to classical music and reading detective stories, historical novels, and biographies. She and her husband, Denis, a retired oil company executive, have 30-year-old twins. (b)(3)

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